Teacher- Parent Communication on Students’ Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Tigania West Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract
This study was an attempt to establish the role of communication between parent and teacher on student academic performance in forty two public secondary schools in Tigania west sub-county Meru County. The study sought to establish the role of parent-teacher communication in regard to improving academic performance and how communication contributes to the development of overall achievement of a learner. It considered the nature of communication between the office and the parents, parents and teachers regarding students’ academic performance and the challenges experienced by the parents and the teachers in regard to the learner’s academic achievement. Descriptive survey design was used. The research study employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques in collecting and analyzing data. Results were presented in tables and figures for clarity. The target population for the study was 7338 students and 42 principals. The parents of these students also made the target population. A sample size of six public secondary schools was selected through stratified random sampling. From these schools 47 form four students, six principals and 47 parents made up the sample size. The study used questionnaires as research instruments to collect data from the sampled principals, students and the parents. These instruments were piloted for reliability and validity. Data was prepared for statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings revealed that students whose parents had frequent communication with the school performed better than students whose parents were less involved. Therefore, it was recommended among others, that there should be effective communication between the parents and teachers to enhance academic progress of their students.

Keywords: Communication, Academic Performance

Introduction
Communication is an interactive relationship between two or more parties for the purposes of passing on information. Communication between parents and teachers is one of the most important aspects for ensuring desired academic performance of a child. Channels of
communication in an education setting includes: newsletters, telephone and verbal communication among others during various meetings held within the institution. The communication promotes the school image, which impacts on the academic performance (Bakhda, 2010). The quality of education in Kenya today is a concern of every stakeholder, the parents being the key stakeholders. Effective communication determines the quality of the parental involvement. There is mounting evidence that parental involvement is a major strategy to improving academic performance by the students (Epestein, 2010). The Basic Education Act 2013 part (iv) section 28 declares basic education as free and compulsory. In addition, section 30 and 31 defines the responsibility of every parent or guardian in ensuring that the child has achieved basic education (GoK, 2013). This is in agreement with Berger (2011) that a parent is the child’s first teacher and that the home serves as the first classroom.

Studies carried out in western countries support the idea that the stronger the parent-teacher relationship is, the higher the achievement level of the child. Butler (2008) found out that the Family-School Relationship Framework emphasizes that schools need to recognize the primary role of the family in education and advocates for families and schools to work together. This can be achieved through effective communication between the parent and the teacher of that particular child. However despite the government of Kenya introducing free primary education from 2003 and the current free and compulsory basic education introduced in the year 2013, Mandi (2012) stated in the Daily Nation that parents have left all the responsibility of teaching to the teachers. In most cases parents neglect their responsibilities of following up their children and communicating to the teachers after the child has been admitted to the school until the parent is either summoned to school or when the child goes for the holiday.

According to Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2005), academic performance is measured by standardized achievement tests scores and teachers reports of academic performance. Examinations are generally acceptable as valid measures of achievement. The education system of Kenya is dominated by examinations oriented teaching as opposed to holistic learning, where passing examinations is the only benchmark for performance. The current basic education policy is encouraging transition to secondary and youth polytechnics regardless of the student’s academic performance at primary level GoK (2013), as supported by Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 which emphasis access, equity and quality at all levels of education (GoK, 2005). In Kenya today, most day secondary school students are engaged in all sorts of labour including working as house helps, taking care of livestock, taking care of siblings, and other responsibility after classes. As a result, they do not get enough time to do their homework and revise what was taught in class. In view of the above, parental involvement through effective communication on students’ education is imperative. Hill & Craft (2003) and Eliason &Jenkins (2003), consents that Parent-teacher relationship in a child’s education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child’s academic performance.

**Statement of the problem**

Communication is an integral ingredient of desired academic performance by the students in any given education institution world all over. Effective communication between the management and parents as well as teachers and students is associated with good academic grades. Regrettably, the researchers have observed that in Tigania west sub –county, that
Meru County’s lack of effective communication has adversely impacted on the learner’s performance.

**Significance of the study**
The importance of the study is to underscore the importance of effective communication in a learning institution. A good leader and manager should invest in effective communication techniques not only in administration, but also between the teacher-student as well as teacher-parent communication. The study will inform the leaders and managers of learning institutions on the relationship between effective communication and academic achievement by the learners. Similarly teachers will also be informed on the role of effective communication both in class and with parents to enhance the learners’ academic performance. The results will generally promote parent-teacher and student communication in pursuit of desired academic results.

**Methodology**
The study used descriptive survey as supported by (Kothari 2004). Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in data collection and analysis. The research included open-ended questions through an interview guide which gave the participants an opportunity to express their views. Close ended questions from the questionnaires also supplemented the data collection. The target population for the study was 7338 students and 42 principals. The parents of these students also made the target population. A sample size of six public secondary schools was selected through stratified random sampling. From these schools 47 form four students, six principals and 47 parents made up the sample size. Piloting was done in two schools to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instruments to be used for collecting data (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Piloted schools were not included in the sampled schools. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the quantitative data by tabulating frequencies, percentages and modal responses of parent-teacher communication in student’s academic achievement in public secondary schools in Tigrania west sub-county. The findings were presented in percentages put in tables. The qualitative data was analyzed through coding, categorizing and collapsing the categories into themes.

**Findings**
Communication between parents and teachers is one of the most important aspects for ensuring the good performance of a child (Epstein, 2001). The study results were as follows:

**Frequency of communication between parents and teachers**
The study investigated the frequency of communication between the parents and teachers, and the effects this communication had on academic performance as indicated in Table 1.
Table 1: Communication frequency between parents and teachers
According to the findings the frequency of communication between principals and parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very frequent</th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Less frequent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principals response</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents response</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>53.19%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>17.02%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

was less frequent (83.3%) and sometimes if the principals fail to communicate to parents they rarely communicate back to principals (16.7%). There was a discrepancy where parents had a completely differing opinion from the principals. The parents’ responses were as follows: very frequently (4.3%), frequently (53.2%), less frequently (25.5%) and no communication at all (17.0%). The variation could have been as a result of parents fearing that giving the accurate information might compromise their relationship with teachers, as there were quite a number of responses on non-communication with teachers.

Response of Principals on Effect of Communication on Performance
The results on the principal’s communication were as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Principal’s response on the effect of Communication on Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the effects of communication on performance and the outcomes. The analysis reveals that all the teachers agreed that lack of communication between teachers and parents affect students’ academic performance with 33.3% strongly agreeing and the rest (67.7%) agreeing. The academic performance of all the students whose parents do not communicate with the teachers were all below average where 66.7% indicated that the performance was poor.

Relationship between parents’ and teachers’ communication and performance
The findings on the relationship between the teachers and parents are presented in Table 3 and discussed below:
Table 3: Relationship between parents’ and teachers’ communication and performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less frequent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 3 showed that only 1 of the parents responded to be in very frequent communication with the teachers, 24 communicated frequently and 16 communicated less frequently while 6 did not communicate at all. From the findings on each category all the students whose parents communicated with the teachers very frequently performed well. On the other hand those parents who communicated frequently with the teachers their students recorded good performance with 27 of the students being above average. However, the students whose parents communicated less frequently or had no communication registered poor performance. From the above analysis, it is evident that communication between parents and teachers directly affect the academic performance of students. These findings can be related to what Mandel (2008) found that communication between teachers and parents had a strong relationship to academic performances. She found in her study that majority of the students whose parents communicated frequently with their teachers had above average performances unlike those whose parents communicated less with the teachers.

**Conclusion**

The research findings shed light on the nature of the role of parent-teacher communication on student’s academic performance in Tigania West Sub-County public secondary schools. The students, whose parents communicated less frequently or had no communication at all, registered poor academic performance. Therefore, it is evident that communication between parents and teachers directly affect the academic performance of students. The school is a community enterprise and the success of schools depends on the involvement of all key stakeholders through effective communication. Parents have a special role in ensuring the individual success of their children as well as that of the school.

**Recommendations**

1. Parents should be involved in the running of school affairs through understanding of school policies. When the school communicates its policies to parents and the community, the running of the school is eased and students’ performance is improved.
2. There should be effective communication between the parents and teachers to enhance academic progress of their students.
3. In addition, capacity building for parents is recommended in order to empower them on the importance of effective communication with the school.
4. Further research should be carried out on barriers to effective communication between parents and teacher in relation to their students’ academic performance.

**References**


